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Northern Review

of Writing and the Arts in Canada

- **STORIES BY**

  BRIAN MOORE, ETHEL WILSON AND GERALD LANGFORD

- **POEMS BY**

  L. A. MacKAY, JAMES REANEY, HAROLD HORWOOD AND OTHERS

- **REVIEWS BY**

  G. WOODCOCK, BELLE POMER AND OTHERS

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CONTENTS

GUARANTORS' FUND 45

STORIES

SASSENACH — BRIAN MOORE — 2
MISS TRITT — ETHEL WILSON — 11
THE MYSTERIOUS QUESTION — JOHN GOODWIN — 27
THE WAVING GIRL — GERALD LANGFORD — 28

POETRY

TWO POEMS — L. A. MacKAY — 9
SNOW STORY — 9
ORPHEUS MORALIZED — 10
IN THIS ROUND PLACE — JAMES REANEY — 20
TRAIN WRECK — E. W. MANDEL — 22
WOMAN IN A LIFE — RONALD BATES — 23
THE SONG OF THE RETURN OF THE SUN — HAROLD HORWOOD — 35
THE DARK COUNTRY — GERALD SCOTT — 37
CARGO — T. E. FARLEY — 38

REVIEWS

BITTER RICE — BELLE POMER — 24

BOOKS

EACH MAN'S SON — GEORGE WOODCOCK — 40
HOME IS THE STRANGER — MILLER MacLURE — 42
SEVEN PLAYS — MAY EBBITT — 43

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS 48

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Continuing *THE CANADIAN REVIEW OF MUSIC AND ART, PREVIEW* and *FIRST STATEMENT.*

Sassenach

Brian Moore

When he bent down to open the cheap brown cardboard suitcase I turned off the main street into the lane and stood beside the audience of three small boys on the pavement. It was a Sunday afternoon in October, a harsh, Ulster Sunday with shops and offices shut and people wandering aimlessly in the streets of Belfast looking for distraction.

He took a pair of large handcuffs out of the suitcase and laid them on the pavement. The small boys moved closer. A grotesque helmet, like a fencer's mask, with a collar and a headpiece of brass, followed the handcuffs. Then a strait jacket, a set of chains and a long thick piece of rope. Three more strollers joined the audience. He closed the suitcase and laid his dirty grey felt hat on top of it, bottom up. Then he removed his brown jacket with the campaign medals and stood there, shivering a little in the chill wind, a small man, about forty years old, with ropey muscles, wearing a cotton singlet, torn brown trousers and stained white canvas shoes.

The strong man's pitch was not far from the port and he must have counted on getting some of the people who like to go down to the docks on Sunday and watch the ships. He looked up and down the lane for a policeman and then, as though he had suddenly noticed us, turned and said: "Good afternoon, gentlemen. Only a few minutes until the performance begins."

He looked past us at the main street and then picked up the set of chains and rattled them, holding them extended over his head. Half a dozen people turned and looked down the lane. Four of them walked towards us.

"This way, lady. This way, gents," he said in a loud whining voice with a cockney twang. "Performance just beginning. I got somefing 'ere to show you you won't see every day of the week. Make way there, Sonny. Let the lady in. Don't be shy, lady. I bark but I never bin known to bite. Gather round, folks. Gather round. No obligation. No charge. If you're not satisfied with my performance there's trams

and taxis to take you away. If you are, I'll ask you to show your appreciation *after* the performance."

He rattled the chains again and laid them down in the laneway. Somewhere above us the weak sun shone like a flashlight at dawn though the endless grey clouds. The strong man cocked a fighter's eye at the sky and turned a handspring.

"Ex-serviceman," he said. "Served all the way through. I was in the reggaler army before the war. India. That's where I found out about mind over matter, ladies and gents. Like these 'andcuffs."

He picked them up and held them out before him like a bridesmaid showing a bouquet. "Regaler Scotland Yard 'andcuffs," he said. "See for yerselves." He pushed them under the face of a fattish man and them swung them above his head.

"Any lady or gentleman 'oo wants to test the equipment I 'ave 'ere and try it out for yerselves." He laid the handcuffs on the pavement said. "I'm an old soldier with a lot of tricks. But there's no trickery in this performance. Any time you think I'm fooling you, just step up ere and try it out for yerselves." He laid the handcuffs on the pavement and turned another handspring. "Now, let's get cracking," he said.

Several more people had joined the group. Like children at a party the newcomers moved around the edges of the crowd, forming a wide, irregular circle round the dancing, pacing, figure in the centre. The strong man picked up the strait jacket and looked at it for a moment.

"First time they ask you to try one of these on for size, you wonder if they're barmy. But that's usually because *you're* barmy — see?" He laughed and rolled his bright blue eyes at a girl who stood on the inner trim of the crowd, holding her handbag to her stomach.

"Getting 'em on's easy," the strong man said, putting his arms into the long sleeves, walking all the while, so that everyone should get a close look at the jacket. He hitched the heavy canvas up to his chin and shrugged his shoulders in.

"Now, I need doin' up," he said. "Any volunteers ? Come on, Sir. All you 'ave to do is tighten up these leather straps as tight as you can get 'em."

The man shook his head and the jacket was thrust in front of a couple of gangling corner boys. Egged on by their girls, they stepped selfconsciously into the circle.

"Ooray! Now, let's see if you can stop an old ex-serviceman," the strong man shouted. "Let's see if these blokes are as tough as they

look."

He muttered some instructions to the boys and they started tying the jacket, doubling his arms across his chest and tugging on the leather straps.

"Don't mind me," the strong man said, looking cheerfully at the crowd. "Let's see 'ow 'ard you can pull."

The corner boys exchanged glances and then pulled together, without humor, straining, intent, Irishmen stuffing it into an English gaum. Veins stood out on the strong man's neck and his weather roughened face became turkey-red.

"That's the stuff. Coo! Ain't they strong?" He winked at the audience, bouncing up and down on his heels, and said in a sergeant's tones: "Tie 'em tight, now. Okeydoke. Thank you very much, gents."

He stepped back into the centre of the circle and started shouting again, walking up and down like a man in a prison cell, shrugging the upper part of his imprisoned body to get the feel of the jacket.

"I picked this up in India from a 'eathen," he cried. "It ain't muscle wot counts, it's control. Control can get you anywhere. Ever try it on your mother-in-law? It works wonders."

A titter started somewhere and the crowd pushed forward, the people at the back straining to see into the circle.

"Now, watch me closely," the strong man said. "I shall require silence for this trick. It requires concentration and agility, like I said. Control—see? Now, mind you watch me closely, ladies and gents." He moved a little to the right as he said this and stood quite still. Then, shrugging and straining, his congested face bobbing, he brought his imprisoned arms over his head in a jerking movement.

" 'Old it! 'Old it!" he shouted as a murmur of admiration moved in the crowd. "I'm not out yet!"

He fell on his back and writhed along the pavement, twisting and turning his wrists. Suddenly his hands were free and he was back on his feet, unbuckling the thongs behind his neck.

"*That's only the beginning!*" he roared, glaring out at the fringes of the crowd. "Don't go away. I'm an old soldier with a lot of tricks. But no trickery." He threw the strait jacket on the ground and skipped back into the centre of the circle.

"Can I 'ave your attention for a moment, ladies and gents, please," he said, holding up his scrawny arms. "Before I go on with the performance, I'd like to explain one thing. My wife, my worry and strife, is usually 'ere to 'elp me in my act. But she's sick today, see?

So I'm an ex-serviceman on my own. Now, 'old on a minute. I don't want you to go away just yet. If you're not satisfied with my performance there's trams and taxis to take you away. I shan't try to stop you. But if my efforts meet with your favorable consideration, I'll ask you to show your application *after the performance.*"

At this mention of money a few people began to drift back towards the main street. The strong man rolled his eyes round the circle, estimating the crowd. There were about sixty people.

" 'Old it! 'Old it! Ladies and gents," he cried. "I'll tell you what I'm goin' to do. I'm goin' to ask your indulgence until the end of the performance and then, if you're satisfied, I'm goin' to ask each and every one of you ladies and gents to contribute one penny. Only one penny. That's all. That won't break anybody's 'eart. There's nobody can't afford a penny. Will you do that now? One penny for the performance. My wife is sick today and I shall 'ave to work without 'er assistance. One bleeding penny. Which I shall come round and collect *after* the performance. Will you wait now? Will you do that? If you won't you'd better move off before I continue. Now, I'll give anybody that wants to move off exactly thirty seconds to do it."

He stopped speaking and stood there, silent, his bright eyes on the crowd. Everyone avoided looking at him. The dour North Irish faces turned from his watchful stare. Some muttered to each other while others looked up at the sky for signs of the omnipresent rain. Nobody moved away.

"Rightio!" said the strong man in a soldier's bark. "Everybody's good for a penny. Right. Now, I'll give you two tricks that are worth a pound of anybody's money."

He picked up the handcuffs. I looked down at his faded brown jacket, folded on the ground beside the battered suitcase. A weather-worn rainbow of colour stretched across the lapel. Eighth Army ribbon. He had been one of Montgomery's Desert Rats. Italian and Normandy campaigns. A couple of others I couldn't place. Meanwhile, someone had locked the handcuffs on his wrists and placed the ugly, heavy helmet on his head.

"It locks behind!" he shouted to the crowd. "Ever see The Man in the Iron Mask in the cinema? Well, you're looking at 'im now, ladies and gents. This is a special mask, used in the old days on mother-in-laws and politicians. Once you put this on 'em they've 'ad it. That's right, Sonny. I want that chain. Bring it 'ere. Thanking you very much. Now, look at this chain, ladies and gents. Try it on

for size. That's it. Full steel link chain, the best that Britain can forge. And that's the best in the world."

"Fake !" a hard Irish voice yelled. The crowd shifted and stirred uneasily.

"Okay, Sonny. Come up 'ere and try it," the strong man called back, his eyes rolling behind the grille of his helmet. "Now, let's get back to show business. I need some 'elp with this girdle. Oo's to put this chain around me? Thank you, Sir. That's right. Don't worry about me. Tie it right. That's it. Now, the padlock. Rightio. Now, watch me close, ladies and gents. Oop-la!"

The handcuffs sprang open, dangling from his wrist. He hoisted his manacled hand aloft and looked at the sky. The clouds were blacker and a few spitting drops of rain had started falling. The strong men glared up at the sky and clasped his hands together. Muscles corded under his skin and the chain burst from around his chest and fell with a loud clatter on the pavement. His jaw sank into his neck, his face mottled and his shoulders shook. The helmet flew open and he shook his head downwards like a girl shaking out wet hair. The helmet crashed to the pavement and rolled over.

"Can't keep an old soldier down!" he roared triumphantly. " 'Old it! 'Old it! That's only a warm up. Now, I'm goin' to show you somefing no other man can do. I'm goin' to show you why they can't 'ang me. They can't shoot me neither. Jerry found that out in the desert. Ex-service. Ex-British Army. Yes, ladies and gents, and trying to make an honest living if you'll let me. Only one penny asked. Only one penny. Get your pennies ready. After this feat of strength I will conclude my performance and I'll be coming round to get one penny from each and every one of you."

A few people started moving out of the crowd which now completely blocked the laneway. Agitated, the strong man jumped up and down, peering over heads at the deserters.

"Can't spare a penny," he said bitterly. "Can't keep their word. Let 'em go. Let 'em go. Draft dodgers. Cheat their mothers out of a tanner. Let 'em go. Anybody else want to go with 'em? Last chance. I'll tell you why, ladies and gents. This trick, which I'm now about to do, takes a lot out of me. So please don't go away when I finish. Give me a minute to get my breath *and* your penny."

A penny dropped in the centre of the circle. " 'Old it! 'Old it!" shouted the strong man. "Not now. Lat-ER! And please don't throw the pennies in, ladies and gents. My wife is sick or she'd come round

to get your contributions. I'll be round with the 'at immediately after this. Only one penny. Right? Now, let's get cracking!"

He picked up the thick rope and held it out. "I need four volunteers for this trick," he said. "Four good strong blokes willing to use their muscles. Come on, now. I'm the bloke that's getting 'urt. Let's not muck about. Let's 'ave four gentlemen. 'Ow about you, Sonny? Thank you very much. Now, these two gents who 'elped me before. Thank you very much indeed. Now, another one? 'Ow about another one? 'Ow about you, Sir? No? Don't be shy. That's it. 'Ooray! Now, let's get weaving!"

He rubbed his grimy hands on his cotton singlet and held out the rope. It was about fourteen feet long. Prancing, he laid it across the lane, a diameter to the watching circle. Then he picked it up at the centre and twisted it around his neck like a grotesque necktie.

"Now. I want silence for this trick. I want everybody quiet while these blokes strangle me. I've always come through until now but, if I don't do it this time, I'd like my last moments peaceful. And *wait till I finish.* Afterwards, if you're satisfied with my performance, I'll be round for that penny. Thank you, one and all.

"Now, you gents," he turned to the four men. "Two of you take one end of the rope. That's right. Now, you two take the other end. Rightio! Now just pretend you're playing tug of war except that my neck's twisted in this rope in the middle. Now, I want you to start when I tell you and pull as 'ard as you can until I snap my fingers for you to stop. No jerking. Just take a long steady pull and put all your weight behind it. I'm not protected and insured, but don't you worry. Nothing will 'appen to you. All set? Now, let's see what an ex-serviceman can do . . . Pull!"

The two teams of men started pulling on the rope, gently at first, then, leaning back, put their weight behind it. The strong man, his legs wide apart, braced himself and hunched his shoulders as the rope bit into his neck. Sweat bloomed on his face which turned crimson then a choking blue red color. A few women in the crowd turned their heads away. The men pulled harder and the strong man bobbed up and down in the centre like a red-and-white handkerchief on a tug of war rope. A ripple of amazement set the watching crowd swaying as they pressed closer, narrowing the circle.

Suddenly, the sky darkened as though an invisible stage manager had lowered the house lights. Then, thick and steady, the rain beat down on the laneway. The crowd turned their faces skywards, the

circle of watchers wavered and broke. Hurrying for shelter they passed the tightly shut eyes and congested face of the conqueror, shaking under the pressure of the rope, holding his breath in his choking windpipe, unfeeling, counting his thirty seconds of resistance against death. Finally, his arms lifted, he snapped his fingers and the men released the rope.

The strong man staggered forward, pulling the rope over his head, massaging his chafed neck. The four men who had held the rope, turned up their collars and reached in their pockets for some change. The strong man opened his eyes in time to see his audience converge on the main street, running for open doorways, tram cars and covered shop fronts.

" 'Old it ! 'Old it!" he roared, "Don't run away. Only cost you a bleeding penny. That's all." He swooped down and picked up his dirty felt hat.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you, Madam. That's it, Sonny. Thank you, Sir."

He quickly ran around the dozen people still standing in the downpour. Passing me, he picked up his jacket and slung it over his shoulders. The campaign ribbons were rain-sodden. I put a shilling in his hat.

"Thank you very much indeed, Sir," he said. He reached in his hat and transferred the money to his trousers pocket. Then he looked up at his old, implacable enemy.

"Only a shower," he said. "Shouldn't think it will last."

But the rain beat down steadily on his upturned face, blinding his fighter's eyes. Persistent Irish rain.

L. A. MacKAY

Two Poems

SNOW STORY

Suddenly light flared out from the dark window
and he moved more cautiously over the creaking snow.
Low boughs laid on his lips a cold finger
and sprang back, as the silence dropped, with a soft whir.
The shadowy mink, by his moving step startled,
skimmed like a thrown stone over the glitter. Cold
sucked at his muscles; powdery breath bit in his nostrils.
He listened at the clearing's edge. The house was still.
Deep in the cold dunes he swung north, in a cautious
drifting down, stealthily, on the blind side of the house.
Unheard he hid by the chimney, crept past the corner,
and laid stiff fingers on the capped latch of the door.
Suddenly thrust. The door swung; the snow tumbled
in from the banked drift, and the swift light spread
over the level swells, blank. The incomer
stepped stiffly into the house; and the soft air
lapped at his eyelids. The last ember shivered,
flared in the cold gust, fell. Not a spark stirred.
He closed the door, and stood for a heavy instant
listening in the soft dark, then with a grunt
squirmed out of this coat, and turned towards the dead embers.
There was a gliding rustle in the frosty firs,
and he groped by the hearth with blunt hands for fresh kindling,
easy at heart, for the new wind will bring
drift over drift of snow, to hold long hidden
marks on the trail, and bodies of dead men.

ORPHEUS MORALIZED

The saw-tongued sedge that edged the scaling rock
drew back, and their feet fell in a soft sky
where daffodils rose and set in the iris bloom.

Then the sage Orpheus looked for a moment back,
and the leaping shades, like a smother of black snow
closed on him, hooded in a sober dream,

that he went thoughtful through the world, as blind
as Oedipus, and more alone, nor knew
his hideous rending on the Thracian mount.

and seemed from death still into living day
But Eurydice never checked, nor never turned
to wander, well-companioned, well content.

Miss Tritt

Ethel Wilson

Miss Tritt is a chapter from *Tuesday and Wednesday,* one of two novellas in a book to be published by MacMillan's.

Victoria May Tritt had been, for as long as she could remember, the youngest Tritt girl, nothing more, conveniently anonymous. If one should attempt to record the life of anyone as un-noticed and as unimportant and as timorous as Victoria May, the words "anonymous" and "anonymity" are bound to occur inconveniently often. It was in Smith Falls that Vicky had been the youngest Tritt girl. In Vancouver, now, to her landlady for purposes of rent, and to her employer Mrs. Ravoli for purposes of wages and instructions, she is Miss Tritt; to other people she is nothing, anonymous. Life on such terms as these is arid, one thinks, but it suits Vicky.

After the eldest Tritt girl married and went to live in Duluth, and after the middle Tritt girl — Bertha — married and went to live in Vancouver, and after Mr. Tritt died and was buried in Smith Falls, Mrs. Tritt and the youngest Tritt girl came West to be near Bertha. And then Bertha's husband went to Moosejaw, followed by Bertha and the children, and Mrs. Tritt and the youngest Tritt girl stayed on in Vancouver. They stayed there for lack of any motive power to do anything else; and because the climate of Vancouver is fairly easy to live in; and nominally — but not actually — because Mrs. Tritt's brother's daughter, Myrtle Hopwood, came to Vancouver at about that time and the theory was that it would be nice for Myrtle. It turned out to be neither nice nor nasty for Myrtle who had an anaemic disdainful prettiness and subjugated and then married a pleasant no-good man called Mortimer Johnson, and thereafter did not see very much of Mrs. Tritt and the youngest Tritt girl. Mrs. Tritt and Victoria May really stayed in Vancouver because, however insipid or unimportant you are, your humanity imposes upon you certain conditions which insist that you spend twenty-four hours a day somewhere, and that you spend, somehow, twenty-four hours a day; and so, as they were already in Vancouver, they stayed there.

Victoria May had her small job in the little notions shop on Commercial Drive. She neither enjoyed nor disliked her job, but because she was neat, silent and congenitally honest, she was useful to Mrs. Ravoli her employer. Mrs. Ravoli ended by taking Victoria May for granted, as just another notion in the store, and Victoria May would have been distressed had things been otherwise. If Mrs. Ravoli had died, Victoria May's plight would indeed have been desperate, as her timidity would have prevented her from finding a new place without making efforts which would have been painful to her. Fortunately Mrs. Ravoli did not die.

Mrs. Tritt, however, did die. The youngest Tritt girl was helped through the bewilderment of the funeral by her cousin Myrtle Johnson and by Myrtle's maternal aunt Mrs. Emblem whose embracing kindness drove Victoria May away in flight from Mrs. Emblem and thus repelled Mrs. Emblem. When the funeral was over, Victoria May retreated from her benefactors in case they might want to show her some more alarming unnecessary kindnesses, only emerging sometimes to see her cousin Myrtle who after all was a cousin, and did not bother very much about her one way or another, which was as Victoria May liked it.

Mortimer Johnson, Myrtle's husband, alarmed Vicky in a pleasant masculine fashion. She thought him handsome, noble, and kind, like a movie star, which he was and he wasn't. He was a jokey kind of man. When Morty arrived home and found Vicky sitting nervously on a chair as if she were about to get up, or standing by a table as if she were just about to leave, he always greeted her warmly in his hoarsely pleasant voice and asked her what was her hurry. The enveloping masculinity of Mort excited Vicky in a pleasing unfamiliar way, but caused her to desire to leave as quickly as possible, which she did; and as she escaped down the stairs she always felt an uneasy glow from Mort's presence and from the kind words that he had tossed to her. She had never seen Myrtle demonstrate her thoroughly bad temper with Mort, and so it was that she thought humbly that Myrtle and Mort were an ideal couple. These little incursions into life last her for some time. She wants no more. She could not have less. She receives no mail. She writes no letters. At Christmas time she selects two cards and sends them to her married sisters. She received, formerly, two parcels. She receives, latterly, two cards.

By the time, now, that Vicky Tritt is thirty-nine, she is little Miss

Tritt who has drawn her cloak of anonymity so closely about her that the dreaming eye does not observe her. She is anonymous, as a fly is anonymous. To the alert and glancing eye she is like so many others that she is indistinguishable except when seen repeatedly in the same place, as, behind the counter where she sells the notions; or customarily leaning against the rail down by the docks watching — as you do — the seagulls; or sitting, withdrawn, in a pew at St. James's Church; but you will not know her again when you see her in another place; the place has to be united with the person before Miss Tritt exists as Miss Tritt. This satisfies her. She has not thought all this out, but she has so ordered (if that definite word may be used) her timorous life that she is able to avoid all notice on the part of potential acquaintances, or, worse than that, of friends. She is sufficient unto herself, in a parched way, and yet she is sometimes lonely with a vast loneliness that a dreadful recurring moment appals. She goes her way by day and by night and all is well enough; and then suddenly she is aware of a loneliness which is insupportable. What makes her suddenly aware and alone ? It is not the crowd in the street, for the anonymity of the continually passing crowd suits her; it is, perhaps, the greeting with delight of woman with woman, of man with woman — not of man with man, which stirs nothing; it is the ascending again of the stairs and going into her bedroom and feeling in the dark for the light which hangs small and naked in the middle of the room; it is the emptiness of time and occupation, the desert that lies between now and sleep; it is the inexplicable fusion of something within her and something without. Yet she does not desire company. Like the fakir who has for so long held his arm unused that it is now atrophied, so Miss Tritt's power of friendship is vanished, gone. The fakir forgets his useless arm; Miss Tritt forgets, on the whole, that she is lonely.

But this special loneliness, which at unexpected times overwhelms her because it seems as though it will never end — and it will not — is as it were a revelation of something vast which lies concealed behind a curtain. It is insupportable, like the sorrow of humanity, and one dare not look, for, like the sorrow of humanity, it is there. This much she knows from the frightening glimpse which she for a moment sees. She averts her gaze and must at once busy herself with small tangible objects. She will walk. She will devise activities to keep her hands and body occupied. So she hastens to avoid the revelation of her insupportable loneliness by means of small physical activities which at last

—through the similar years—become a routine. This routine at length rules her life, though not unpleasantly. From this routine, arid as it may seem to those whose lives, fortunately for them, can hardly contain their fulness, there grow, at least, small pleasures, and at last, a continuing blessing.

Seven days are in a week and Vicky has to fill them. Take away the day's work and there remain only the evenings, occasional Saturday afternoons, and Sundays to be filled. Mercifully, she eats and sleeps. She prepares her evening meal in her room — no, not a meal, it is just something to eat. Then, if the season is summer and the day still light, she will walk down to the waterfront —it is not far — and watch the seagulls. They, too, are as anonymous as the crowd of people on Hastings Street and make no demands upon her. How pleasant it is to lean against the rail, down by the C.P.R. dock and watch the seagulls wheeling, alighting, taking off again, and filling the air with their cries. And as if that were not enough, behold the waters of Burrard Inlet, different in colour tonight, and the ships — little and big — coming and going, and across the water the houses and buildings near the water line of the North Shore, all lit up by the evening sun, and the twin spires of the old Indian church by the water, and behind all this the mountains; and behold the sky! Against the peaceful backdrop of mountain, sea, and blue clouded or gloomy sky, there is something moving, always moving. The eye follows the seagull, the floating log, oil on the water, the busy launch, the two squat ferries that ply between the two shores of Burrard Inlet, the big docking ship. One is entertained as in a dream.

Vicky is never alone, leaning on the rail above the water. There is a drifting population that leans against the rail, mostly men, but she does not observe them and they do not observe her. Some are people from the prairie who are actively interested in this scene that lies before them. They comment upon the smell of the salt and the diurnal miracle of the tides which never fails to surprise them. But most of the people come down here because, vaguely, they like it; or because they have nothing whatever to do; or because they are on their way to somewhere else and it won't hurt to stop for a minute.

One man comes fairly regularly. He is not vague. He comes because he has an affinity with the scene, and particularly with the seagulls. He thinks he knows and recognizes some of these calculating active birds which have little to recommend them except their strength, their fine coarse beauty, and their wheeling flight, and that

is enough. It is improbable that he knows and recognizes them. He has enormous curiosity about the seagulls. Their ruthlessness and carnality please him. He would like to be one, he would indeed. He checks by the Post Office clock — because he has no watch — the time of the first flight westwards in the evening. Then he watches closely the regular evening flight westwards of the seagulls. How they pour forth from all the waterfront through the draw of air above Stanley Park. The seagulls cease their wheeling and crying; their behaviour has changed; and now in their evening flight they go, steady, purposeful, silent, flying in ones, twos, threes, and companies, to where they will spend the night. And where is that? Is it at the mouth of the Fraser River? Is it on the western rim of Sea Island? People say it is on Anvil Island. And why do they go, nightly, and return at daybreak? Could they not spend the night here? No, they leave together and fly steadily westwards together, not one turning back.

The man who watches the seagulls with perception is called old Wolfenden, but that is not his name and it never was. He is old and he is obviously poor. He has a scrubby beard. In the summer time he lives in a hollow tree in Stanley Park and will continue to do so until the police discover that he is doing this. Then they will turn him out, not unkindly. He expects that day.

In the meantime he enjoys outwitting the police because they are young and handsome in their leggings, because they have elegant groomed and shining loud horses, and motorcycles, and fine prowler cars equipped with devices for finding out lawbreakers (he approves of all this, the law should be kept), and he is only an old man with a false name and a dirty copy of King Lear in his pocket, and for half the year he outwits these handsome men. The rest of the year, or at least when the weather turns bad, old Wolfenden has a bed in a rooming house in the East End that used to be kept by a Japanese, but is now kept by a Swede; he gets bronchitis and is sent into the hospital. Although old Wolfenden is as alone as Vicky Tritt who often leans on the rail beside him without observing him, he is not lonely. He can, and does, look back along a sorry procession of years which he does not regret. If he regards these years philosophically, and he does, he sees them as descent from the pride of five months spent on the staff of the Manchester Guardian thirty years ago to his present condition. His troubles have been the wrong women and the wrong drinks and himself; he knows this and he spends no time in regretting

it. As recently as last year he was paid for a bit of work by a Vancouver newspaper, but as a journalist he has long been unreliable, washed up. "Old Wolfenden ? Where is he now ? Is he dead?" He is not dead. He is living in Stanley Park in a hollow tree, with a copy of Montaigne and his bear and some old journals that the man in the newsstand near the C.P.R. station gives him sometimes, and some blankets and some scraps. He is leaning on a rail, looking at seagulls and at the other people who lean against the rail. He sees them with the old habit of a writer's eye. He speaks brusquely to an insipid looking character, a woman, who often comes here. She is, indeed, as regular as he, and seems to watch the seagulls. Why does she come. He is interested in this kind of thing. He says (because he wishes to know) "Why do you come here?" Vicky Tritt is surprised and alarmed. It is one kind of fear if a woman speaks to her. It is another kind of fear if a man speaks to her. She will not commit herself, but says ridiculously enough, "Oh, I just happened . . . "

"Liar," thinks old Wolfenden contemptuously," "people are fools."

Vicky need not move away, as she soon does, because old Wolfenden has dismissed her; she is too stupid; and now he is watching a coastwise ship glide round the corner of Stanley Park, sailing sweetly into Burrard Inlet, entering the harbour.

On Friday evening Victoria May buys one magazine. It is a Movie Magazine and it does her for the weekend. She buys it according to the face on cover. She enjoys the life of the movie stars, in which passion — or some counterfeit of passion — seems to take up a great deal of time. She is pleased when she reads of one of her favourites — whom she knows better than she knows anyone in Vancouver — settling down in her third, fourth or fifth marriage to the true innocent joys of cosy domesticity, found at last. What a hope. On Friday night she looks at the pictures, but she does not allow herself to read the magazine until Sunday morning, in bed. That is part of the routine, and provides a pleasant residual feeling of something enjoyable ahead. Saturday night is her big night, for then she has her dinner at a *cafay,* and goes to a show. Mrs. Ravoli goes to the shows and so does Mrs. Pavey on the lower floor of the rooming house, and during the week Vicky hears by chance which are the best shows. She likes to go to a show in one of the big movie houses on Granville Street where all the Neon lights are. The Neon lights are swell and are a show in themselves; but if she has had to buy some aspirin and stockings that week

she goes to one of the cheaper houses.

On Sunday morning she rests in bed and reads her movie magazine. On Sunday afternoon she walks down to Stanley Park. On Sunday evening she goes to St. James' Church on east Cordova Street, and on Wednesday night she goes there, too. She goes on Wednesday night partly because she happened to go once and liked it, and because of the goodness which emanates from Father Collier and the other Fathers and touches her and in some way enriches her extreme poverty of spirit and leaves her serene, and partly because it is something to do. On spare nights, she picks up a newspaper from a discarded pile that lies in the basement of the rooming house and takes it upstairs with her. This is not pilfering, because the paper has been discarded. It does not matter that the paper is old because she is not interested in the news, but she does enjoy the advertisements. As she is not going to buy anything mentioned in the advertisements, it does not matter that the paper is out of date. She sits, often wearing her coat, and with her knees wrapped in the comforter, and reads about the important residence overlooking magnificent view, all floors in quarter cut oak, den with fireplace, two master bedrooms on the second floor, three bathrooms, owner leaving city. Two master bedrooms; what can that signify! No wonder this house is important. She projects herself — or some braver person — into the skin of a girl — or widow — seeking companionship or matrimony, and vicariously meets, marries and discards three or four men in turn in the course of the evening, but without desire or envy. She takes — and leaves — several positions. She loses herself in the funnies. She goes to bed. Her routine is successful, and prevents her from too often being aware of the desert of loneliness in which she dwells, underneath her small shelter of routine. And sometimes, but rarely, she drops in to see Myrtle, almost hoping that Myrtle will be out and that Mort will not be in.

One Tuesday evening — it was the evening that old Wolfenden had spoken to her and had driven her away from the railing above the C.P.R. dock — she turned eastwards, towards home, and then she went on as she decided to go and see Myrtle. The sudden dark was descending. The dark would give her an excuse for leaving almost before she arrived. She climbed the stairs and knocked timidly on Myrtle's door. There was no answer. She waited. She would knock once more, and if Myrtle did not come to the door, Vicky would turn and go down the stair, well satisfied. She heard movement and a voice within. She would like to have gone away, but having said to herself

that she would knock again, she knocked. Myrtle came to the door. She was not looking pleased, which made Victoria May wish that she had never come. However, when, in the uncertain light of the doorway, Myrtle saw that it was only her timorous cousin standing there, she seemed to brighten and said with something like heartiness "Come in Victoria May."

Victoria May crossed the threshold and, looking into the room, saw the luscious Mrs. Emblem rocking to and fro (Oh dear me, I *do* wish I hadn't come!) Mrs. Emblem smiled at Victoria May in her usual pleasant easy manner but thought of the times after Mrs. Tritt's funeral when she had tried to draw Victoria May into her genial orbit, when she had tried to be nice to her, and warm and cheer up this poor spinstery wintery thing. But Vicky had shrunk from her, and Mrs. Emblem was sagacious enough to know that Vicky would shrink again from any advances. So that was why Mrs. Emblem said nothing. Vicky stood, stiff, slight and awkward; Mrs. Emblem rocked and regarded her with her lazy golden smile but did not speak; Myrtle stood there waiting; the frying beef smelled good.

"Come in," repeated Myrtle.

"Oh no, I couldn't come *in,*" said Victoria May; it seemed important, but impossible to explain, that she should not go in.

"Well come in *come* in," said Myrtle a little impatiently. "You'd better stay and have some supper. Aunty Emblem can't eat any, she's got gas."

How many thousand times the same fear had descended on Vicky that now descended upon her — the old familiar fear that the girls were going to pick sides, and no one would pick her, and at the end she would be left over and one of the captains would say to the other captain "And *you*'ll have to take Victoria May Tritt," and she would have to be taken; the fear that came as she looked from girl to girl; the malaise that came at the end of school and at the end of Sunday school, when all the other girls ran off home together or walked together, heads bent together, in twos or threes, all talking at once and then saying to each other "You come over to my place," "No, you come over to my place"; the fear that made her cross the road to avoid speaking to someone she knew; the same fear that came when her mother used to dress her in her good dress and make her go out to a party to which all three Tritt girls had been invited ("Oh Motherr, do we haff to ask the youngest Tritt girl, she's a lemon!"); that familiar fear of people and their ways which possessed her.

"Oh no I couldn't," said Victoria May quite terrified now by this prospect of spending an evening with Mrs. Emblem and with Myrtle who tonight seemed a little impatient, "I only called by to inquire." That was sufficiently well said. Something came into her throat as it often did when she was especially nervous, and she said huskily, "Well, goodnight, all," and turned and shot down the stairs, safe from them and alone in her timorous world.

"It beats me," said Mrs. Emblem, "how a person can grow up, and act like that. That cousin of yours always reminds me of some poor dawg that nobody wants."

"Well I guess nobody does," said Myrtle frankly and went on preparing supper.

Down the darkening street went Victoria May feeling greatly relieved; and yet she was familiarly unhappy, too, because she was not as other people are, freely talking, laughing, even quarrelling together. She could not do those things any more than swim, and she could not swim. She walked home quickly, her head poking forward as in haste, along Powell Street, along Cordova Street, up Homer Street, as though she had an appointment; but she had no appointment. How could she have an appointment? When she reached the house she went down to the basement. There was the customary pile of old newspapers beside the furnace. She took one; she took two; she went upstairs to her room. She felt around in the darkness and found the electric light bulb hanging small and naked in the middle of the room. She turned on the light, locked the door, took an apple out of a bag, pulled a chair under the light, sat down and began to read, peering a little. She read "The Census taker asked a Scotchman named Mac how many children he had. 4 was the reply, and that's all I'm going 2 have. Why? Well, I read in the Almanac, said Mac, that every 5th child born is a Chinaman." She read to the end of the hardware storeman's jeering advertisement, and then on to Information Wanted. "Will Mildred Jabowski nee Fink, or anyone knowing her whereabouts, contact Box 803, Confidential." Oh who is Mildred Jabowski and where can she be. Does some fortune await her. Or some threat. Oh Mildred Jabowski, is it safe for you to reply?

She bit into her apple, and read on. Here in her room she was at home and secure. She was safe among the people she knew so well, the true companions of her mind, who did not know her, who did not even turn their faces towards her, who demanded nothing of her — not recognition, not even a word.

JAMES REANEY

IN THIS ROUND PLACE

Every thing in this round place,
This round blue head we live in,
Everything is mysterious, far
And unnameable;
Far from explaining, far from capture
In the trap of a tongue in a face.

In this curved place He sent us to,
The curved mind cannot tell
Why the moon should fit the sun
In eclipses, or why do

Some flowers take the colour of Mars
Or clouds like summer milk seem.
What can the detective know for sure
In his hunt for the reason
Of a winter season
Or of whirlwinds and falling stars.

The whirlwind, the rainbow and the star
That falls like a golden shoelace,
For them and the poison
That damns the white mushroom
None knows what the reasons are.

Why do the birds sing like silver hinges
To the doors of Heaven,
Why does the bread rise like a ghost
From the grave of its oven,
Why does the wind blow with such voice
As grief is given,
Why do the clouds so lowly move
Like the souls of our grandfathers
Bringing us rain in their love.

The dust that hangs
In the air of a room
Teaches astronomers humble comparisons,
The faces on dusty floors
Teach us unsureness and hesitations
For we like a Jack in the box
In our small air
Like a thought in a skull
Think we spiral when we straight line
Think we are spoon when we're forktine
And cannot explain why hair
Can be cut with a knife, so certain
Are we of the place where we're hid
When of our coffin we have not discovered
The doomsday to open lid
Nor have found yet
That to open the eye is to shut an eye
For in those opened seeing places
Blindness, and more closed eyelids lie.

Like twelve rocking chairs
Rocking on top of each other
With you, the eye, the I in the twelfth,
So difficult is the riddle
Why all the fingerprints are different
And who is our mother
Why, why we are here sent
And where is the middle.

E. W. MANDEL

TRAIN WRECK

Where she passed over like a maiden aunt
No one was weeping; down the shocked bridge
Rode the gleaming cars, accoutrements
Fell, fell away, over the trestled edge;
Dolls, in the high void, yelled on the wind's hand,
Buffeted and tumbled until time's end.

Girl once, shed her skins in that gay spring,
Was lighter; still on the topless waves forever,
Where she crested the waves, would the young
Name she called in the broken car save her ?
For once crowds got the sprawled sight
Of her razored limbs she'd shaved in the night.

These were my friends who feared and shared
A bald death; their heads in double halves
Bisected, bleak dichotomies, they are assured
Of unmanliness, like a pink fruit, death's loves
So bloodshot and schizoid in his delicate left
Hand where some died till they nearly laughed.

Supported under air and water now, those names,
My shared friends, so easily gone to ruin
And parted under a weight of sky and rain
We scarcely can support, no longer claim
Our civil living union, this equinox that spares
Us from division, their spring of funeral spires.

RONALD BATES

WOMAN IN A LIFE

The papier mache curtains stand ajar
Like open biscuit tins; the plywood furniture
Hangs from threads like spider webs
Weaving concentric circles in one dimension;
The fireplace—brick, log, and flame—
All as cardboard fantasy, warms
The seeing heart like an ardent and sincere
Advertisement for perfume or deodorant.

She dwells in a fragile lay-out,
Among the desiderata of her mind,
And moves with the precision of a clock hand,
Counting out her minutes like dollar bills.
Gracefully sitting on he floor against a chair arm
She smiles the fixed and social smile,
And signs of some imagined phobia
Flicker about the corners of her mouth.

She is not quite for sale, not quite
Marketable, but could be had, perhaps,
In exchange for the common, the romantic
Dream, wrapped in the proper cellophane and tinsel,
The packaged dream which bears a label: No
Exchange. Its value thus enhanced, it can
Go back for bigger, better, brighter one,
When a few wearings show the cut is off
A little. Who thinks of homemade alterations,
When readymade looks just about as good
As made-to-measure, and can be had on credit ?

Film

Belle Pomer

BITTER RICE

Those who expect to find *Bitter Rice,* directed and partly written by De Santis, another in the tradition of fine Italian post-war films will be bitterly disappointed. An honest failure, which falls short of a set goal, is more easily forgiven; in *Bitter Rice* it is obvious that the only end in view was that of attracting large crowds in order to make large amounts of money.

The scene is laid in the rice-fields of Northern Italy, where women have been gathered from all over the country to harvest and replant the rice. Francesca, the reluctant accomplice of her criminal-lover has joined the rice-harvesters accidentally, as a means of escaping from the city with stolen jewellery. Her partner, Vanni, is to follow her when he has eluded the police. On the train, Francesca is taken under the wing of Silvana, a beautiful seventeen-year old rice-worker who dreams of finding entry to the extravagant way of life she has seen pictured in the movies. When Silvana discovers that Francesca carries a magnificent stolen necklace, she is divided between horror and fascination. Although Francesca's recital of her past life reveals Vanni's ruthlessness, to Silvana he stands for the life of excitement and glamour for which she hungers.

After Vanni arrives at the rice-fields (furious because the necklace which Francesca had stolen for him is not real, but paste), Silvana has no difficulty in attracting his interest. While Francesca uneasily observes the proceedings, Vanni enlists Silvana's help in a plan to steal the harvested rice. All that follows is the crudest melodrama: during a gory scene in the slaughter-house, Silvana, finding that Vanni's love for her is not what she supposed, shoots him; then she throws herself from the top of a high platform; meanwhile the rice has been saved; and the film ends with Marco and Francesca going off hand in hand to a new life together. The outline given here, it may be added, is a mere skeleton of the incidents with which the plot is crammed.

Even if we could take seriously De Santis' statement that the drama of the rice-workers' struggle for food impelled him to put the customs, the sorrows and loves of these women into a film, we would be forced to point out that such a vague impulse is merely the raw stuff out of which a more concrete conception must emerge. On the mass of the material selected, some form must be imposed; from the numerous possibilities of development, one must be chosen. If the rice-workers as a group are to remain the centre of attention, and the camera to probe into many lives, the film-maker must see to it that his audience views the various characters from an equal distance. If the drama of the rice-workers is to emerge through the story of a few central characters, the writer-director must carry through his decision to subordinate the background. And certainly he must be clear in his mind about his central characters, their degree of importance in the story, and the relationship he intends to establish between each of them and the audience. But *Bitter Rice* is a hodgepodge. For half of its length it seems to be Francesca's story, then the emphasis is switched to Silvana, while along the way, incidents like the rice-worker's miscarriage, which should have taken place in the background, are brought forward with inappropriate emphasis. One is left with the impression that the director has picked up anything and everything within reach to fling at his audience, with the result that his audience is tired but untouched.

But in fact, De Santis' statement is too obviously falsehearted to deserve serious consideration. Surely there was enough material in the small private lives of the rice-workers to present their loves and sorrows, if so he intended, without dragging in such extraneous elements as the criminal villain, the consequent shooting scene, and the Hollywood-style stealing and saving of the rice. And what can excuse the shoddy direction which allows Francesca to tell her past history in that most hackneyed of poses, three-quarter face gazing sadly from the screen with such singular monotony of expression, that it is impossible to tell at once whether it is simply bad acting, or whether it is meant to indicate insincerity on Francesca's part? Later, the shot of Francesca, exalted face lifted to the heavens as she carries the unconscious girl from the fields, is ridiculously drawn-out. The affectations of the film finally culminate in the absurd spectacle of the women burying Silvana's body in rice.

The irony of it is that De Santis in his greed let slip through his hands some very worthwhile material. Silvana, for example, so

eager to escape from her sordid life that she blinds herself to the possible consequences though they stare her in the face, is a valid and familiar personality, and one which has not yet been deeply enough interpreted in literature or the films, and certainly not in *Bitter Rice*. And there is the fatal attraction which the dangerous man seems to exert over women (the shocking aspect of which Hollywood writers soften by combining the good and bad man in one, frequently presenting the hero in a bad light at the beginning of the story, but having him prove his innocence at the end). De Santis touches the hidden masochism of this kind of attraction in the scene where Vanni, half in cruelty, half in love-play, beats Silvana into surrender. But De Santis is so bent on exploiting situations for their sensational value that the possibilities of a mature and honest presentation of this kind of insight are lost to him.

Point for point, De Santis may be said to have carried out his aim: he has put the customs, and some possible loves and sorrows of the rice-workers of Northern Italy into a film. And while we expect that the clink of box-office receipts will drown out this bitter, angry voice, we are compelled to say that the film he has made is muddled and disjointed, in poor taste, and for all its careful authenticity of background, is altogether lacking in conviction.

The Mysterious Question

John Goodwin

How many beautiful young ladies in this world wear black velvet ribbons around their necks ? Marcel did, and John wondered why the first time he met her. They had been going together for three weeks before John got enough courage to ask her. Marcel looked worried and changed the subject quickly. Their love blossomed and one day he asked her, "Marcel, why do you wear that black ribbon around your neck ? She burst into tears and said, "I thought I told you not to ask me that question !" The incident was not forgotten and quickly the years passed by, John was in his fifties when again he asked.

"Marcel, darling, will you please tell me the reason you wear that black ribbon around your beautiful neck ?" She burst into tears again as she had done long ago and said nothing. As the time passed and John lay in his deathbed he said "Marcel, since I am to die in a few hours, I wish, as my last resquest, that you would tell me why you wear that black ribbon around your neck ?" There were no tears from Marcel as she said, "All right, I'll show you." Her fingers trembled as she lifted them towards her neck. She felt the ribbon. Her hands groped for the clasp. Carefully she undid it and her head fell off !

The Waving Girl

Gerald Langford

Now that I have gone over his order item by item, making sure that we have in stock everything called for, Captain O'Connor leans back in the black-leather-upholstered, armless rocking chair, puffing meditatively at the cigar which he accepted, when he first sat down, from the special box Mr. Ekfelt keeps on his desk for this purpose. He seems determined to have his customary after-business chat even though it is I instead of my employer with whom he must deal, even though I make no overture but merely sit waiting uncooperatively.

"Just heard down at the wharf about the Waving Girl," he remarks frowning appropriately.

Not only do I feel, as always, entirely out of place sitting behind the cluttered roll-top desk where — except for these two hours when he goes home for lunch and a nap — Mr. Ekfelt sits from morning until night, bald-headed and walrus-mustached, presiding over the store in majestic preoccupation or nodding and grunting familiarly with some regular customer while I fill prescriptions in the rear. Today there is something more than this. For the past week my mother has been seriously ill, and I cannot help thinking in terms of the future, even though the doctor says she will probably come through this attack all right. Until I have finally escaped the role of dutiful, confining sonship at an age when other men are husbands and fathers, I feel unqualified to deal with someone like Captain O'Connor. In his worn serge uniform he might be taken for some middle-aged policeman or streetcar motorman, but he is a man who gives commands, who guides a ship to unknown, adventurous lands across the sea.

"Suicide, I hear it was," he says, persisting.

I nod unencouragingly. "Yes, that was the big news around town last week."

"How'd she happen to do it, does anybody know?"

I keep my attention directed toward the front door, but no other customer appears to release me. "Seems to have been a matter of money," I say. "That's the story anyhow."

He must surely see — this important customer to whom I must play host, who, like the captains of nearly all the freighters calling at our port, has come to order his medical supplies and pass the time of

day at Ekfelt's old store — that I would like to have done with the prescribed ritual of sociability. But he has no intention of leaving.

"What is the story around town here?" he inquires. "They didn't give me any details down at the wharf."

So there is nothing for it but to relate, as briefly and impersonally as possible, the final incident in the career of our most famous local citizen, the spinster-hermit who, even in my childhood, had already transformed herself or been transformed by the townspeople into a sort of legend. Until her death last week it must have been years since I had given her a thought, but for a long time I used to be full of curiosity about her.

On the fifteen-mile trip from town to the seashore I always looked forward to glimpsing the Waving Girl's green-roofed cottage, set off by itself several miles from any other habitation, on the far side of the widening, marsh-bordered river channel, a good quarter-mile from the railroad. From the time the river curved into view to run parallel with the train for the last few miles, I would lean close to the window, scenting the salt air by now and hoping to catch sight of a freighter coming in to dock or going back out to sea. These ships always gave a prolonged deep blast from the steam-jetting whistle up on the funnel when they passed the Waving Girl's house, where she stood on her porch fluttering a white flag by day or swinging a dim lantern by night. With unfailing regularity I would find some question to ask which required my mother, or rather gave her a pretext, to tell once more the story of the beautiful, wealthy young girl who fell so deeply in love with a poor, unknown sailor that when he was lost in one of the worst disasters ever reported in coastal waters, she had refused to accept the fact of hisdeath.Instead she had gone on for all these years now bidding farewell to each outgoing ship in commemoration of her lover's final departure and welcoming each incoming ship in anticipation of his return, which people said she still confidently awaited.

"Why didn't she find some other daddy to marry?" I would ask. "Don't you guess she gets awful lonesome way out there by herself?"

My mother would shake her head with a faraway expression. "Real love, the kind that came to her, is a very rare and beautiful thing, son, and when she lost it, it broke her heart. That's something you'll understand when you're older."

So for a long time I continued to accept the story of the Waving

Girl on much the same level as the stories about Cinderella or Pinocchio, say, only it was of special interest compared to those book stories because I could see where she lived every time we went to the beach and I would glimpse her in person every now and then, a tiny figure which popped out of her house to wave her flag with mechanical precision, then popped back inside like a jack-in-the-box.

Later, during my high school years, we often took Sunday afternoon drives out the new palmetto-lined highway, which for the last few miles became almost one continuous bridge across the fish-smelling inlets and intervening stretches of marsh grass growing out of a tar-like muck into which a person would sink up to his knees at the first step. The road passed somewhat closer to the Waving Girl's house than the train did, but still we were not close enough to make out any details beyond the fact that, when she appeared on her porch to wave her flag without interruption while a ship moved from the first to the second of two fixed points in front of her premises, she wore some odd kind of head covering, something that looked like the poke bonnets worn by women a long time ago. There was never time to study her, though. At the exact moment that the steam ceased to jet from the ship's whistle, she would vanish indoors and her house would resume its look of a place which was uninhabited and uninhabitable, built there in the midst of all that marsh grass and to be reached, if at all, only in a boat, although there was never any sign of one around the place.

At this time we rarely talked and surmised about the Waving Girl any more. We were already making plans for my going off to college.

"It's going to be a big day, fellow, when you come back with that word 'Doctor' in front of your name," my father would say, a druggist himself who said 'Sir' respectfully whenever a doctor came into the store where he worked.

My mother would frown thoughtfully and say, "I just wish he could go back to my state to college. A man who's going to study medicine couldn't do better than go to Vanderbilt, you know that."

But I had never been away from home even overnight in those days, and our state university seemed much farther away than I could ever bring myself to go and stay for months at a time. As I walked along the roaring beach between my preoccupied parents, watching some ship move farther and farther out to sea until finally there was only a faint mark of smoke left above the horizon, I would think how

the remembrance of the Waving Girl must be a comfort to sailors when they saw the land disappearing behind them. Their own families and anyone else they could think of would forget all about them at times and go about their private affairs, or might even move away somewhere, never to be heard from again. But the Waving Girl could be counted on to stay right where they had left her, never for a single day deviating from the routine which confined her as close as a prisoner held as a hostage for their safety.

Some years later still, as a man whose education had been cut short by the death of my father and the necessity of going to work and supporting my mother, I came to identify myself — bitterly — with the Waving Girl. I too, it seemed, was to be deprived of any real life of my own. While my former classmates moved away to accept jobs in distant cities, or set up households of their own out in the new subdivisions of town, I went on living in the same apartment where I had grown up, working in Ekfelt's store for a salary which just supported the two of us. I had to swallow my resentment at the way all our neighbors considered me a model young man. They seemed to think there was something fine and noble about the career of renunciation I had had forced on me, and they smiled benevolently each evening when I returned home and ate the dinner my mother had cooked and then sat on our porch, like the elderly men up and down the block, instead of going out to dances and parties with other young people.

"Son," my mother kept saying dutifully in those first years, "if I'm able to keep house for you this way, surely I'm able to hold some kind of a job that would give me a living. I want you to go ahead and marry and have a home of your own."

I would sit there in the confinement of the parlor of my boyhood, refusing to let myself think back about Caroline, the girl I had been in love with my last year in college. All that last spring I had felt that she was only waiting for me to say to her in words the thing I had for months been wanting to say on those carefully casual strolls between classes and those regular but unarranged meetings in the library at night. But what could one in my position do? My father had died during the winter and I was lucky to be able to finish out the year. So when June came I told her good-by almost casually, the two of us standing in front of her dormitory and making conversation. It was not until I was on the train that night that my eyes suddenly filled with tears and I said aloud, "I'll always love you, Caroline. There'll never

be anybody else."

"But I mean it, son," my mother would insist, sitting across the room with her sewing while I barricaded myself behind a book. "I don't want you to wait until it's too late. I'd hate to think of you all alone in the world after I'm gone."

What was there for me to say? My mother said the things that were to be expected of her. I have no doubt that as far as words went she was entirely sincere. But how would she have taken it if I had actually done the thing she kept urging me to do? And what would any business man in town have thought of me if I had set up a home for some young girl and sent my aging mother out to ask for charity in the form of some job which she was entirely unqualified to hold ?

So the years have gone by. Now, at forty-two, I am thought of by everyone as already a confirmed old bachelor, whose only concern in life is supposed to be my unselfish devotion to my mother. She herself still talks as if she expects me to marry, but even if she were suddenly to leave me free to do so, most of our friends would be as astonished at my trying now to court some girl as they would have been at the news that the Waving Girl had forsaken her seclusion to take a husband. Not that I care what they think. In fact, I have often maliciously imagined the rude surprise they may all be in for one of these days. And now particularly, with my mother as seriously ill as she has been for the past week, I would be less than human if I did not find myself thinking how it will be when I am free at last.

Defensively therefore I relate to Captain O'Connor the facts about the death of an old woman with whose cloistered life my own must seem to him directly comparable. Casually, to make clear how unconcerned I am with the whole affair, I explain how, as I heard the story, the Waving Girl woke up quite suddenly to the realization that she was penniless. It was the first time she had been seen on the streets in over forty years and she was quite a sight to see, I was told: a woman with disheveled white hair and a distraught look in the eye, wearing a young lady's hobble-skirted dress preserved from the turn of the century. She had come in to call on the president of her bank, a courtly old gentleman who had known her as a girl and who, it came out afterward, had been trying for a good while to warn her and give her advice about her financial affairs, but to no avail. She had never bothered to answer or probably even to read his letters. It

seems that she had been turning her securities into cash, and when she finally came in to see Mr. Chisholm, the only thing she had left was that house out there. Even if she had been willing to sell it, it would not have brought enough to help much. So there was nothing Mr. Chisholm knew to suggest, as he explained afterward, except that the old lady should find some sort of position she could hold — something, he suggested, in the public library perhaps. By that time, though, she was no longer listening to what he said. She got to her feet while he was still talking, it seems, and walked out of his office, and the next day they found her body in the river, caught in some marsh grass not more than fifty yards from her home.

I end my telling of the story there, unwilling to tell Captain O'Connor the last detail, how the coroner happened to be in our store a day or so after the body had been recovered and I heard him talking to Mr. Ekfelt about the affair. What he said was that there was something downright uncanny about it, the way the old woman's face was like some kind of mask she was wearing. It was the face of a woman in her sixties all right, he said, but her body might almost have been that of a woman in her thirties. He went on talking to Mr. Ekfelt and it offended me to hear those two old men make coarse jokes about her young-looking body. I did not like to think of the old soul having to come to such a degradation even in death.

Captain O'Connor has been revolving his cigar in the circle of his lips. The remark he makes now about the story I have told him comes as a surprise to me.

"Real sad she had to end up that way, wasn't it?" He shakes his head as if to supplement the inadequacy of his words.

I look at him in a suddenly new light, and he frowns as he adds, "Sure won't be the same without her down there to wave, friendly-like, every time we make port."

All at once the hostility I feel toward the man grows out of all bounds. I look him up and down superciliously, this hard-faced, muscular seaman who has the simple-mindedness of a child in spite of all he has seen and done in the world, and maliciously I remark, "Yes, a very fitting exit, I guess. Joined her lover in his watery grave, as they say. Regular tear-jerker, wasn't it?"

He looks up from his cigar, visibly shocked at my irreverence.

"The only thing is," I persist, "people don't really pine away with a broken heart for forty years, do they?"

The captain rebukes me with his look. "I don't know as we

have any call to judge her."

"Oh, come now. We might as well be realistic about it. You know perfectly well she must have gotten over any real grief long ago, even if there was anything to that story of hers to begin with."

He is troubled and even resentful at my attitude, but he is not apt with words and all he knows to say is, "Well, she's dead and gone now. I guess the least we can do now is — "

I give him no chance to finish his pious platitude. "The way people sentimentalized over that old woman!" I go on relentlessly. "Putting out all those picture postcards of her house! Going on for forty years telling each other that fairy story of true love! In actual fact I wouldn't be surprised if she was just some old maid that couldn't gain any notice any other way and made the whole thing up from scratch."

Carried away as I am by this perverse idea, I continue to debunk the legend I myself have accepted unquestioningly all my life, parrying the captain's slow-spoken defense and striking over and over with ridicule and angry sarcasm until I have overwhelmed him utterly and he gets to his feet, gesturing impatiently. Having thus dismissed the subject, and me along with it, he hitches up his trousers and directs me brusquely to get his order down to the ship by six o'clock without fail. Then he takes himself off at a swaying gait, leaving me to sit on at the big desk for some minutes, baffled at whatever it was that came over me.

It is not until I go back behind the prescription case that my defiance gives way, without warning, to a wave of contrition, as if I have committed some sort of betrayal for which there is no way to make amends. I stand irresolute, moving my utensils back and forth aimlessly on the lab shelf. I refuse to give way to the sudden urgency of the impulse that has come over me. I rebute myself harshly. But then, against my will, I reach for the telephone and begin rapidly to dial the number of my home. I wait until I hear the first ring of the instrument at the other end of the line. At that moment, impelled by another, conflicting impulse, I hang up suddenly. I know perfectly well that it cannot be true. Nevertheless I find myself backing away from the telephone. I stand rigid, waiting for it to shatter the silence with its sudden ringing, waiting for a message I know I could not face if it were to come at this moment of ludicrous, unreasoning panic.

HAROLD HORWOOD

THE SONG OF THE RETURN OF THE SUN

(from the cycle THE ESKIMO YEAR)

The sun has come back
Out of the chasm of Torngak,*
Out of the twilight of the ice and the stagnation
Of the winter blood singing its low song
Of memory and of expectation—
We have waited long
For a time when the days should be counted toward birth:—
Now will conception begin again in the earth,
And the ice shall be fruitful with rivers; the voice of the sea shall be heard
Under the locked prairie of snow, and out of the north
(Our mother the north from whom all good is received,
The seal herds and the solitary bear,
The travelling companies of whales and the small silver fish)
The great blue mountains banded with green
Shall travel southward speaking of summer,
Guiding world-wandering salmon back to their native river.

We have spoken of death in the long night
When the fat-fed flame grew red under the arch of snow,
When the dogs whimpered before sleep and a blind trail
Stretched into a wilderness without hope.
We have spoken of death, but now we will sing of life,
The song of beginning anew—
The song of the sun's homecoming
Into the hearts of his people.
Hail ! Lord of the Universe, risen from death !
The steps of days shall reach into your noontide:
We will dance you a trail over the sea;
We will dance and make ready a path.

*Pre-Christian Eskimo god. The One.

The soul of the flame shall be still
In the quiet cave, in the passionless night time:
The heart of the fire shall not pant
As when the shaman of the outer world
Breathes fitfully, uneasy in slumber.
And the drum beats and the pulsing
And the throbbing and the beating of the drum
And the thudding of the dance
Shall pause: shall make a pause:
Shall pause and listen
While the sound of wings is heard
Like death's echo retreating against silence,
Shall pause and listen
To insistent gulls
Hovering over the edge of empty places.

The sea mews have come back to make our hearts
Sick with the solitude of spring.
The lonely agony of the mild nights
With the green smell of the uplands and the bays in motion,
The haze of the outer islands and the stations of summer
Have raised their hands over us. The cries of our children
Joyful on the wet rocks, and the lesser sounds of the shore
Give us strength for the long day, for the day of the sun:
Give us strength, make us glad, lift up our hearts—
Hail ! Lord of the Universe, risen from death !
We will dance an end to darkness;
We will dance light into the hidden places,
We will dance light against the curtain of evening
When the long nigression of the neuter night
Sweeps down over the flatlands, when sides of mountains
That rise stark five thousand feet out of the Atlantic
Are hung with darkness; and only the sick lights of the north sky
Breed spirits in the soul.

Now do the nights grow briefer:
On the southward sea the line of the sky
Cracks suddenly with light.
Now do the young days dance
And the young waves play
Ceaselessly with the shadows of the shore.

Now do the young weeks leap
And the young streams sing,
And the spirits of the night
Flee at the sound of the dance
At the bright presence
Of the spirit of the song.

Songs in the centre of silence clouded with cold !
In the centre of all silence, suddenly burst the songs,
To shatter this sterile corruption of ice,
Long splinters of silence falling forever
Between the noise of ice floes, the thunders
Of floating islands and worlds overthrown,
On denuded bedrock foundering
With a noise like armies.

GERALD SCOTT

THE DARK COUNTRY

For Tom Thomson

The frost is on the water
and we must sleep—
all of the dark country

is anchored deep
late, O late the star
cold in October's night
ringed by her frozen space
in the flat snow light.

the dogs are sharp of voice
and panting plumes of steam
all of the country is anchored
in the black stream.

T. E. FARLEY

CARGO

Two men came down at the dark of night
(Cold black waves on a fatal shore !)
And one was large, and one was slight
With a slippery knife that shed blue light
And he left the other dead on the shore,
But the corpse he fled was the corpse he bore.

a stone a cloud a kiss denied
carry the cargo of the heart
hell's no more than a faulty start
each man is what he carries inside

A murderer struggled with jagged rocks
(Ghoulish moon in a death-cold sky !)
Clambered upward and heard the cocks
Crow unknowing as drowsy flocks
Swam in the mist of a daybreak sky.
That man shivered, and where was I ?

blue-lit blade and loaded dice
don't come round and tell me now
that you or god have the real know-how
every fire is its own ice

A sailor packed his soiled sea-bag
(Thick black bible and bottle of rum !)
Wiped his hands on a scrap of rag
And ran like a man that wanted to lag
An walked like a man that wanted to run.
Every sinner is some saint's son !

o stones will sprout and leaves will pray
you needn't tell me the corpse is found
that day we buried him underground
each man's silence was his own say

And the lover steps from his mistress's room
(Heavy the perfume of success !)
Stops by a dead tree in the gloom
Adjusts his scarf and thinks of doom
Cursing his dark love's last caress
As he hangs himself on its silken stress.

a strangled cry a kiss allowed
carry the cargo of the soul
every man is his opposite pole
each man's sun is that man's cloud

Walk the world with similar stride
(Wide is the sky from heart to heart !)
Who can fathom the dragon inside
The men who limp and the men who ride
On the rocky trail, in the crowded mart,
Love in the eye, death in the heart ?

a shifty eye and a cargo deep
who killed who while you looked away
hold my dagger and smooth the clay
don't try to tell me you were asleep

for you're one of the crew & part of the show
stained with the stain of the blue-lit blade
clambering over the rocks afraid
doomed — for no one will never know.

BOOKS

EACH MAN'S SON by Hugh MacLennan. Macmillan. $3.00.

Each Man's Son, like two of Hugh MacLennan's three previous novels, belongs to that borderland of our father's generation where the subject is neither contempotary nor sufficiently distant to be classed as historical. The world of which it talks, the problems of personal and social adjustment of which it treats, are still too near and personal to the reader for them to have slipped into the easy, dispassionate perspective of the total past. This mingling of the near and the already irrevocably lost confronts the novelist who chooses such a subject with an acute problem of architectural proportion, of modulating his emphases in dealing with a time towards which his — and our — reactions are inevitably unstable. It is no accident that in assessing the past the period immediately preceding our own is always the most neglected and derided, and to attempt to write of his father's days otherwise than in caricature a novelist must either be very courageous or very simple-hearted.

MacLennan, I think, is rather the latter, but it has not entirely saved him from the dangers I have already indicated. It is perhaps a little unfair to use anything out of the *blurb* of a novel in criticising the book itself, yet I cannot help feeling that there is something peculiarly significant in some of MacLennan's own words which the publisher has quoted, presumably with the author's approval. He remarks: "When a novel is finished you can tell if it is good by the way you feel. You wake up in the morning with the sense that the world is new and that you must start all over again learning how to live." Such words can be said by a man of sensibility; they could never be said by a critical man, and it is the critical sense which gives natural balance and the force of contrast to any book.

MacLennan's plot is built around a small mining community of Highland Scots on Cape Breton Island — the country to which he himself belongs. A miner, Archie MacNeil, has left his home to become a prize fighter in the States, and his wife, Mollie, is left alone to bring up their son. The local doctor, Ainslie, a brilliant surgeon suffering from the frustration of hard routine work in a mining village, is also involved in an emotional conflict with his wife which arises largely out of their inability to have children. He encounters the boy, Alan,

and, realising his potential gifts, begins to take an interest in him, to educate him, until the child rapidly assumes in his mind the position of the son he himself cannot produce. His hopes, however, are frustrated when Mollie, fearing that the influence of the doctor will alienate Alan from her, refuses to consent to a continuation of the education plan, and decides to go away with a glib little Frenchman who has settled in the village.

The story now mounts almost neatly into tragedy. Archie MacNeil, his boxing career ended by failing sight, returns to find the Frenchman making love to Mollie. He kills them both and himself dies from a stroke, while the child sees the whole of the terrifying scene. We are left with the prospect of Dr Ainslie — now the intervening characters have all been so providentially swept away — at last being able to realise his desire to love and care for the boy who has become his substitute for a son.

This scanty summary cannot do justice to the ambient darkness of Calvinist guilt in which the tragedy is played. Once again, as in his earlier work, MacLennan cannot avoid seeing life at any age running according to the traditional Greek lines, and the mechanics of a classical destiny grind out their pattern too heavily and harshly on the human weakness of his characters, so that the ending of the book seems almost grotesquely artificial and imposed.

Yet it is a novel with many merits. The relationship of classes and persons in this little society, bound by a common faith in its own damnation, are often subtly portrayed, as well as the fear which always seems to overtop hope in the hearts of its people. There are many passages of writing which, if perhaps not so impressive as the best in *Barometer Rising* and *Two Solitudes,* are sensitive and extremely evocative of the life in this area where, as so often in North America, the new life that emerges is shot through with the shadows of the old world from which its creators came. There are, for instance, the fine chapters which describe Archie MacNeil's downfall as a boxer, the last days of a rather childish and fundamentally well-intentioned primitive who has become involved and finally broken by the corrupt and destroying world of commercialised brutality which centres on the boxing ring. And MacLennan seems finally to have assimilated more thoroughly than before in his fiction that preoccupation with the growth of a Canadian consciousness which beforehand was too often stated in abstract and almost chauvinistic terms that make it a kind of literary sore thumb in the salient points of his earlier novels.

Each Man's Son does not, I think, increase MacLennan's stature as a novelist, and it still leaves some of his fundamental problems unresolved — in particular it does not, as I have said, show any minimisation of his tendency to wrench the natural development of human relationships into the pattern of a mechanistic fate. Its virtues, I should say, lie in a more felicitous development of character and incident, and in an integration of the whole action of the novel so that, unlike much in *Two Solitudes* and *The Precipice,* one feels that everything here really belongs to a single and rounded whole.

George Woodcock.

HOME IS THE STRANGER, by Edward McCourt. MacMillan's, Toronto. $3.00.

The jacket blurb informs us that this is "primarily a study of a sensitive character under stress of emotion." It is not that. It is, for much of its length, a perceptive and exhaustive description of the impact of the Canadian West upon a stranger from the Old Country. Upon the large and forbidding landscape to which Mr. McCourt introduces us in chapter 2, his heroine and her husband emerge, not as Norah and Jim (their names in chapter 1, when they are in Ulster) but as "the driver" and "the woman." A nice touch. Pitiless and grand, the weather, at once god and enemy, dominates the action through a revolution of the seasons.

What is more, Mr. McCourt is a good sociologist. He knows all about the society of the West : its shibboleths (the necessity of meeting "people", for instance), its arrangements with destiny. The eyes of the Irish warbride are clear, at least, as his own, and he makes us see Twin Buttes on "Sports Day" and the dance at Paradise Vale. There are solid analyses of the mechanical civilization of radios and tractors, of the longing for and simultaneous repudiation of tradition. Especially to be recommended is Brian Malory's bitter speech on pp. 158-59.

But Mr. McCourt repudiates Malory. (Does he repudiate his opinions too ?) His story forces him to. For the story is of that shoddy quadrilateral which we meet so often in fiction without the pretensions (or the literacy) of this novel. There is Norah, the sweet and ardent and barely - sophisticated wife — she is not especially "sensitive";

she is just *alive;* her husband, humane and gentle and often inexplicable; the seducer, an Irish expatriate with a Byronic manner; and the "other woman", a school-teacher with a red sensual mouth and a little and provocative figure. Need I say that the heroine broods until near the end over her husband and the sexy one (had he kissed that mouth ?); that she sleeps with the Irish menace during a blizzard while her husband is at the Coast; that in the end the sensualists go off into the silence of sin, while she and her Jim look forward to a new life on the farm ?

It is sad enough that this should be the story, but sadder still that Mr. McCourt should with the death of the child (O yes, there is a child, so winsome and manly, and he dies of pneumonia caught while his mother is brooding over her adultery in winter weather) fling away all that fidelity to his locale which distinguishes the novel up to this climax. For the snow becomes a white symbolic waste in Norah's delirious attempted suicide, "white snow-flakes sepulchring an adultress," and after that one is not prepared to enter the new heaven and the new earth of the last chapter, sanctioned by the final words: ' "Because I love you," she said.'

Mr. McCourt would do well not to venture there himself again. He should stay in the real West with Weary Rivers, who is the best character in the book. I should like to see more of Weary, who at a great moment says : "I'd be a heller with women if I'd let myself go." Mr. McCourt would be a heller with stories, if he would hold himself in.

Millar MacLure.

SEVEN PLAYS, by Elmer Rice. The Viking Press, New York (In Canada, The Macmillan Company, Toronto). 524 pages. $6.50

Elmer Rice ranks among the most consistently successful American playwrights of the past three decades, not far below Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson and Clifford Odets in popularity. Now, with the publication of his seven best plays in one volume, students of drama have an opportunity to evaluate his work, undisturbed by the innuendoes and emphases that actual production in a theatre brings to any play. Perhaps it is to Rice's credit that he has made the most of the possibilities of the American theatre, clearly reflecting both its limitations and its virtues in his work.

Significantly, *The Adding Machine,* 1923, Rice's most pretentious attempt to get at universal values, is the poorest play in the collection and smacks very much of a pessimistic (if such a thing is imaginable) Thornton Wilder. Its attack on the average man's slavery to an unrewarding job and a sterile society, and its prophecy that man's spirit follows an uninterrupted downward trend, leave the reader with a feeling of "so what ?" Although the play ought to have capitalized on the mood of disillusionment prevailing at the time it appeared, its treatment of its subject seems gratuitous, and its relatively short run merited.

Timing, however, accounted for Rice's biggest theatrical triumph, *Street Scene,* 1929 : a tenement drama of men trapped by economic conditions. Its appropriateness to the year in which it opened assured it a long run of 601 performances. But the play that is well timed is also in danger of being dated early; and when *Street Scene* was revived four years ago on Broadway, even the interpolation of songs and dances failed to keep it alive. It is likely to strike the present-day reader as little more than a clever profile of the varied inhabitants of a cosmopolitan city block.

Rice was one of the first American playwrights to deal with fascism, but in this case, timing worked against him. *Judgment Day* appeared in 1934, too early for its implications to be fully appreciated, and the exeprience of the past 15 years makes it sound cliche, today.

To my mind, the play that stands up best is *Counsellor-at-Law,* 1931. The American lawyer who has worked all his life only to find that his work, though of questionable value to society, is the one thing that can keep him from jumping to death from his office window, remains a credible portrayal and certainly the most vital of Rice's characters.

Were it not for the usefulness of this collection to those interested in analysing American drama, Rice's plays would have been better left to fulfill the purpose they served quite well in their time: that of providing entertainment. It seems a pity to spoil memories of pleasant evenings.

May Ebbitt.

TO OUR READERS

For the second time we are approaching our readers with a request for donations. Last year's appeal met with a very generous response, and we hope you will give us your support again. As you know, the publication of a Canadian literary magazine is in the nature of an act of faith, and the survival of Northern Review depends to an unusual extent on the cooperation of its readers. We *must* obtain our fund objective if the magazine is to continue to appear.

The objective for this year's fund is $1500, and a list of contributions already received appears below. There is a remainder Of $515 still to be obtained. If you believe that a magazine devoted to contemporary writing and criticism has a function to perform in Canada, we hope you will help us by contributing to the guarantors' fund.

The Editors

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RONALD BATES is lecturing at Upsala Upsala in Sweden.

MAY EBBITT contributes to *The Montreal Standard.*

T. E. FARLEY is a director with the Newsreel Unit, National Film Board.

JOHN GOODWIN of West Vancouver, B.C., is now in West Vancouver High School. His story, *The Mysterious Question,* was written when he was aged twelve and in Grade 7.

HAROLD HORWOOD is the M.L.A. for Labrador in the Newfoundland Assembly.

GERALD LANGFORD, an American writer, is on the staff of the University of Texas.

L. A. MacKAY, poet and critic, teaches classics at the University of California.

MILLAR MacLURE is a staff-member at The United College in Winnipeg.

E. W. MANDEL is a Toronto poet.

BRIAN MOORE lives in Montreal.

BELLE POMER, our film critic, has also contributed to *The Canadian Forum.*

JAMES REANEY is lecturing for a second year at the University of Manitoba.

GERALD SCOTT, of Toronto, has also contributed to *Contemporary Verse.*

ETHEL WILSON is the author of *Hetty Dorval* and *The Innocent Traveller.*

GEORGE WOODCOCK, who was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship last year, is at present in California.

THE NORTHERN REVIEW AWARDS

The names of winners of last year's awards will be announced in our next issue. New awards will be offered for the coming year if the campaign for the guarantor's fund is successful and the magazine is able to continue.

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